

OBITUARIES

SIR RALPH TURNER

Professor Emeritus Sir Ralph Turner, M.C., M.A., Litt. D. (Cantab.), D. Litt. (Banaras), D. Lit. (Ceylon, London, Santiniketan, Kathmandu), F.B.A., P.R.A.S. 1952–5, died on 22 April 1983.

With his death the Society has lost much more than its senior Fellow (he was elected in 1912): we are bereaved also of an outstanding scholar, an able administrator of the Society's affairs, our oldest surviving Gold Medallist, and, holding to our memory perhaps more than any of these, a constant, warm-hearted and always sympathetic friend.

Turner had been introduced to Sanskrit while still at school, and W. H. D. Rouse, the headmaster of the Perse School, Cambridge, must have permitted himself many a glow of pride at his pupil's rise to eminence in the sphere of Indology. Going on to Christ's as a Classical Scholar (he became a Fellow in 1912, an Honorary Fellow in 1950) he achieved firsts in both parts of the Classics tripos before adding another in Oriental Languages and publishing an astonishingly mature article on the Latin stress accent in the *Classical Review* before his first Indological article appeared in 1913 in our own *Journal*, "Notes on the language of the *Dvāvimśatyavadānakathā*". From this linguistic analysis of Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit he moved on rapidly to the historical study of the modern Indo-Aryan languages, encountering them in the field through his entry into the Indian Educational Service to teach Sanskrit at Queen's College, Benares; his reputation had obviously gone before him, for in 1914 we find him giving the Wilson Lectures in Philology at Bombay University. He benefited from those linguistic surroundings to send us three further articles in two years, on Gujarati and Marathi historical phonology. But he obviously found time to enjoy other aspects of India as well: when he retired from the Directorship of the School of Oriental and African Studies, the Department of India, Pakistan and Ceylon, looking for a farewell present for him which should reflect especially his *Indian* involvement, decided on a framed aquatint of a mosque at Jaunpur by Thomas Daniell (Jaunpur is only thirty-odd miles from Benares, and it was the closest we could get); Turner was captivated. "You couldn't have found anything to give me greater pleasure in remembering those days," he said. "That is the first great monument in India I took my young bride to see!"

But before that event, before he had acquired that young bride who was to be his constant companion and helper for over fifty years, had come the darker days of war. Turner, already a Lieutenant in the I.A.R.O., joined the 2nd Bn of the 3rd Q.A.O. Gurkha Rifles, fought with them in the Palestine campaign (where he was wounded and was awarded the M.C.), returned with them to garrison the N.W.F.P., always talking with and listening to the "bravest of the

brave" (his own words), and making the first of the notes which were to culminate in his great *Comparative and etymological dictionary of the Nepali language* which appeared in 1931; its valuable indexes of all words quoted from other Indo-Aryan languages, "compiled by Dorothy Rivers Turner", were to be the foundations of Turner's great life's work, the *Comparative dictionary of the Indo-Aryan languages*, which had to wait until his retirement for its completion. The *Nepali dictionary* alone gave Turner an unsought, but much appreciated, reputation in the Gurkha Regiments (I was directed to it, eleven years after its publication, in the 1st Gurkha Mess library, and for me, trained at school as a scientist, it opened up a new world of scholarship such as I had not dreamed of, and was the prime cause of my interest in oriental studies); his affection for the Gurkhas and Nepal continued, and he was often to be seen wearing a Gurkha Brigade tie.

After the war, Turner returned to Benares, as Professor of Indian Linguistics in the B.H.U., but after two years came to the University of London as Professor of Sanskrit in the newly established School of Oriental Studies which this Society's vision had done so much to bring into being. Here not only did his scholarship develop (he rejoiced in having ready access to so many books which were hard to come by in India), but he was called upon to play an ever increasing part in administration, especially after he became Director of the S.O.S. in 1937, and became an able advocate of the needs of scholarship against the often obtuse attitudes of officialdom, which persisted even in wartime. For this part of his great career the reader is directed to Professor J. C. Wright's fuller obituary notice in the School's *Bulletin*,¹ XLVII/3, 1984.

It was during this time that the Society benefited from his sage counsel and experience in his two Directorships, 1943–6 and 1949–52, and his term of office as our President from 1952 to 1955. From 1963 he had been an Honorary Vice-President, and after his retirement from S.O.A.S. he represented the Society on its Governing Body for many years. He attended Council whenever he could, when we came to realise that his silences could be more cogent than another man's prolixity; and we recall, even with affection now that the time has passed, the empyreuma of his home-grown tobacco which clung to Council room. He published little in our *Journal* during those years, although his masterly obituary of Grierson stays in the memory; but the *Journal* during the years of his Presidency is full of felicitous touches purely his own, from which I would pick out the speeches, or extracts from them, when presenting the Burton Medal to Gwen Caton-Thompson, when presenting the Universities' Essay Prize to Simon Digby, and when receiving, from the hands of Sir Richard Winstedt, the Society's Triennial Gold Medal. During his Presidency came the 23rd International

¹ I am grateful to my friend Clifford Wright for allowing me access to this before its publication.

Congress of Orientalists at Cambridge, over which also he presided with ease and dignity; those of us who attended it remember not only his quiet delight in being back at Cambridge in such company, but the town's delight at welcoming back such a distinguished son of Cambridge. Then, shortly before his retirement from the Directorship of S.O.A.S., he accompanied our Past President, the Earl of Scarbrough, as one of the representatives of the Crown at the coronation of H. M. King Mahendra of Nepal in May 1956 (he explained his enforced absence from a function after his return to "injudicious indulgence in the riding of elephants"). More than the privileges of the occasion he enjoyed being back among Gurkhas again, and the award of the Nepalese Order of the Gorkha Dakshina Bahu gratified him enormously (he was admitted to the 2nd Class in 1951, and to the 1st class in 1960).

Like many great men, he delighted in simple pleasures. His tobacco was just part of his enjoyment of his garden. Two more instances: once, when he heard me grumbling at the cold after a winter return from India, he said, "Yes, but there are compensations; I've had some good skating."; and once we ran across him in north Wales in the summer vacation, where he had been enjoying sailing at Abersoch. On that occasion we enjoyed his impish humour. "Do you know what a coot is?" he asked me; a water-bird with a white forehead, of course. "Aha! I've just heard the word locally; it's a measure of coal, spelt c-w-t!" After his retirement, when he and Lady Turner were staying with his old friend and former student Dr S. M. Katre, then Director of Deccan College, Poona (of which Turner was an Honorary Fellow), my wife and I had them as next-door neighbours; the pressures of administration over, Turner was happy to relax in India, meeting old friends in the Linguistic Society of India, and enjoying the profusion of bird life which flocked to Katre's garden. Even then the fullest years of his scholarship were still to come; but he bore his profound learning lightly, and it was always his gentle and kindly nature which left its abiding impression on those who were fortunate enough to know him. The world of scholarship in Indology, the Society, his many friends, and human nature in general, are all the poorer for his departure.

JOHN BURTON-PAGE

PROFESSOR JOHN BROUGH

Within the space of one year, the death has occurred of three Fellows who brought great distinction to the University of London in the field of Indology: Sir Ralph Turner at the age of 94; David Friedman at the age of 81; and, as the result of a tragic accident, John Brough at the age of 66. Implementing

the recommendations of the Scarbrough Report, Turner had been himself very largely responsible for the establishment in 1948 of both the Chair of Sanskrit to which Brough was appointed and the Readership in Indian Philosophy to which Friedman eventually acceded.

Brough's academic record, in many ways identical with that of Turner over thirty years earlier, included four Firsts (M.A. in Classics with Comparative Philology at Edinburgh; Part II of the Classical Tripos, with Distinction in Comparative Philology, and the Oriental Languages Tripos at St. John's College, Cambridge), followed by two remarkable and pioneering dissertations. One, 'The early clan and family system of the Brahmans' together with a translation of the *Gotrapravaramañjarī* (1944), gave access to a neglected medieval compendium of extraordinarily corrupt late Vedic source material. The second dissertation comprised an edition, translation, and linguistic study of the Nepalese Buddhist text *Pāpaparimocana* (1945). This continued Turner's early linguistic analysis of Buddhist Sanskrit; it introduced an evaluation of Newari Tibetan commentary; and, using the expertise in Vedic and Smārta ritual Brough had already acquired, it demonstrated that for a ritual of purification Buddhism was indebted, to an extent not previously suspected, to Hinduism. On the basis of these, he was awarded a Fellowship of St. John's and the D. Litt. degree of the University of Edinburgh.

Throughout his training at St. John's he had been engaged concurrently in war-work in agriculture and agricultural research. From 1944 he was employed as Asst. Keeper to work on the descriptive catalogue of the Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain Sanskrit manuscripts in the British Museum, and he continued this work even after his appointment to the Panel of additional lecturers and then to a Lectureship in Sanskrit at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Appointment to the new Chair of Sanskrit and to the Headship of the School's newly reconstituted Department of India and Ceylon came within two more years, in 1948.

Elected a Fellow of this Society in 1945, his first substantial article 'The early history of the gotras' was published in its *Journal* in 1946 (and 1947). The substance of his dissertation on the ancient literature bearing on these exogamous clans was published with additional detail in 1953 as *The early Brahmanical system of gotra and pravara* (CUP).

Work on the British Museum catalogue had introduced Brough to the interest and importance of archaic Malayalam material. His immediate preoccupation with 'Līlātilaka: a Sanskrit tract on Malayalam grammar and poetics' (*BSOAS*, 1947) was soon to develop, under the stimulus of research work carried out at SOAS by students from India and Ceylon, into a masterly contribution to Western understanding of Indian theories and philosophies of language and poetry. (See articles in *TPS* and *BSOAS*; an edition and translation of the crucial *Dhvanyāloka* completed in 1957 remained unrevised and unpublished.)

During 1955–56, Brough and five SOAS colleagues were granted leave of absence for a concerted programme of research in Nepal. Brough was able to pursue his study of Newari, and to obtain specimens and microfilm copies of manuscripts from an important private collection. He was, however, compelled to observe that traditional Buddhist learning was in some respects moribund, and despite strenuous and protracted diplomatic initiatives, he could make at the time only the slightest progress towards achieving access for scholars to the massive collections of Buddhist and other Sanskrit materials in the Bir Library.

In 1958 he was able to secure from Russia photostats of unpublished sections of what is by several centuries the oldest surviving Buddhist literary text; he published this completed (but still fragmentary) *Gāndhārī Dharmapada* in the London Oriental Series four years later. It had entailed a vast amount of ancillary study (the Kharoṣṭhī epigraphy and palaeography of Afghanistan, India, and Chinese Turkestan; Pali, Buddhist Sanskrit, Tocharian, Tibetan, and Chinese versions of the *Dharmapada*; and the philology of relevant Prakrit dialects, including that of Prakrit loans into Iranian). Once the new material could be transcribed and identified, the original sequence of the fragments had to be deduced, and the phonology and grammar of the dialect had to be reorganized in the light of fresh evidence. A comparative study of the discrepancies between the various recensions of the *Dharmapada* could now be essayed, and its publication heralded a new era in Buddhology. It was no longer possible to ignore the fact that the basis of Far-Eastern Buddhism was Prakrit, not Sanskrit, and no longer appropriate to regard the testimony of the Ceylon–Burma Pali canon as unimpeachable. Following further study of the Chinese source materials, which resulted in the important and illuminating ‘Comments on 3rd-century Shan-shan and the history of Buddhism’ (*BSOAS*, 1965 and 1970), Brough spent 1965–66 in Japan studying Sanskrit and other manuscript materials from Central Asia and Nepal in Japanese collections and discussing the Chinese translations with Japanese experts.

He was now the West’s foremost Buddhologist and (the influence of Hayter proving more durable than that of Scarbrough had been) he was destined to remain Britain’s only Buddhologist – in the sense of one who is competent to handle the main requisite primary sources.

He was also by now the West’s most able Sanskritist and exponent of Sanskrit culture. Already in *Selections from classical Sanskrit literature* (Luzac, 1951) he had taken the trouble to provide the student with a set of simple close renderings of specimens of various Sanskrit artistic literary styles, from the epic to the recondite. In the *Poems from the Sanskrit* (Penguin Classics, 1968), dedicated to his wife Marjorie, he ventured to present an anthology of renderings into English verse, thereby revealing a sensitive mastery of the language of the originals as well as of the English language that is the very antithesis of what normally ranks as translation in the field of Indology.

Is poetry always worthy when it's old?
 And is it worthless, then, because it's new?
 Reader, decide yourself if this be true:
 Fools suspend judgement, waiting to be told.

Kālidāsa

If he had seen this dainty creature,
 Golden as saffron in every feature,
 How could a high creator bear
 To part with anything so fair?
 Suppose he shut his eyes? Oh, no:
 How could he then have made her so?
 – Which proves the universe was not created:
 Buddhist theology is vindicated.

Dharmakīrti

In 1967 at the age of 50 he succeeded Sir Harold Bailey as Professor of Sanskrit at Cambridge and was again appointed to a Fellowship of St. John's College. Disappointment at the general trend of academic events in London had reconciled him to the drastic severance that the move entailed. As Head of a Department he had built up a cadre of Indologists that for scope and balance was without equal in a Western university. As a member of the Governing Body of SOAS from 1954 and a member of its research committees he had continued Turner's endeavour to enhance the School's scholarly reputation. As a member of the Board of the Faculty of Arts and of four University Boards of Studies (and as Chairman of the Oriental Board 1950–54) he had upheld the ideal of a strong centralized metropolitan university. He had served the Royal Asiatic Society since 1949 variously as member of Council, member of the Editorial Committee, Honorary Secretary, Vice-President, and Director (1961–62). He had served the Philological Society since 1948 variously as member of Council, Publications Secretary, and President (1960–63). Only the duties that stemmed from his appointment as Fellow of the British Academy (1961) and the functions of the Societies continued to draw him back to London for any appreciable number of years.

At the height of his achievement his health was already deteriorating, and it was eventually to break down. Nevertheless, the outrageous suggestion that the ancient Indian ambrosia of the gods was to be identified as the toxic mushroom *Amanita muscaria* succeeded in drawing him into a major reappraisal of Ṛgvedic conceptions of Soma (*BSOAS*, 1971) – this in the form of detailed refutation that recalled his earlier masterful debunking of the 'tripartite ideology of the Indo-Europeans' (*ibid.*, 1959). Contributions to Buddhist philology and to a better appreciation of Sanskrit classical poetry appeared regularly until 1977. He devoted his remaining strength, and the weight of his authority, to the

task of organizing with Japanese colleagues a team of scholars capable of compiling a Buddhist Chinese-Sanskrit dictionary.

For Brough, connoisseur of the beautiful in horticulture, in music, in literature, and in life, (as indeed for the classical Sanskrit authors who were conjured into life in his *Poems from the Sanskrit*), scholarly research and true poetry seem to merge into one another as the very antithesis of the follies of ignorance and dogma. In that sense, the Society might take leave of John Brough in the words of his own rendering of Callimachus:

They told me of your death, and brought me tears:
For I recalled the many times we sent
The sun to bed. But, though the time will come
When you are ancient dust, in distant years,
Your nightingales will live; and Death, intent
To pillage all things, cannot make them dumb.

J. C. WRIGHT